

## **“All Scripture Is Inspired – Part 3”**

November 2, 2025

First Christian Church

Scripture Text: 2 Timothy 3: 14-17

Welcome to the 3rd installment of our 3-part sermon series revolving around 2 Timothy 3:16 which proclaims, “All Scripture is inspired by God and is useful for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness.” The first week we celebrated the truth of this verse as long as you are using the verse in its Biblical context. As in, how is it used in the Bible and who is it addressed to. You can’t just pluck out a single verse, apply it to you or someone else, and still know it is the inspired, forever word of God. For the Word of God to Moses and Pharaoh was very different. It’s not exactly a “one size fits all” kind of thing. Last week we again proclaimed the Bible was inspired by God but written by preachers, whose job it is to take the inspired, eternal word of God and apply it to their specific time and place. Which means we need to explore what may have changed in time and place before directly applying a specific teaching to our time and place. Despite what Ephesians 6: 5-9 says, in the United States of America, in 2025, slavery is not okay in any form. Through both weeks I insisted the key word in the verse is “all”. “All Scripture is inspired by God.” As in, when we take all of Scripture and hold it together, and let it push against itself, it squeezes out the inspired word of God.

You remember from last week the New Testament can be broken into 4 different kinds of writings. There are the gospels – Matthew, Mark, Luke and John – which tell the story of Jesus – His birth, life, ministry, death and resurrection. Then there is the history of the Holy Spirit’s work with the early church in the book of Acts. That is followed by 21 letters written from established early church leaders to established churches and other leaders. The fourth kind of writing is prophecy which is focused in the book of Revelation.

Now some individuals, congregations, and even denominations enjoy and really focus on one type of book at the cost of another. What I mean is some might focus on the letters of the New Testament at the cost of the Gospels. They read and study and find good, solid, concrete things that nail down what it means to be a Christian – as in, what a Christian does and does not do. For example, Ephesians 5:5 says, “Be sure of this, that no sexually immoral or impure person or one who is greedy has any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God.” Or 1 Corinthians 6:9-10, “Do you not know that wrongdoers will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived! The sexually immoral, idolaters, adulterers, male prostitutes, men who engage in illicit sex, thieves, the greedy, drunkards, revilers, swindlers—none of these will inherit the kingdom of God.” Those kinds of lists do not exist in the Gospels, and they help bring order to this new thing called church. They give us some concrete actions to avoid. But you have to be careful. The lists say a thief shall not inherit the kingdom of God, yet Jesus looked to the thief hanging next to Him on the cross and said, “Truly I tell you, today you will be with Me in

paradise.” We must note the different audience. The Gospels are written to potential believers while the letters are written to people who already believe.

Like I said, the letters of the New Testament are inspired by God, written by people, and help bring order to the new church by defining marks of the Christian community as well as individuals. As in how we do life together. I am introducing the topic we are going to work with through the rest of the sermon with the next passage from Paul’s first letter to the Corinthians, the 14<sup>th</sup> chapter, verses 34-35. It says, “Women should be silent in the churches. For they are not permitted to speak but should be subordinate, as the law also says. If there is something they want to learn, let them ask their husbands at home. For it is shameful for a woman to speak in church.” This passage along with passages like 1 Timothy 3 that says church leaders need to be a husband of one wife affirm that only men should be taught about Jesus, speak in church and serve as ministers, elders, and deacons. It says it in the Bible which means it’s Biblical. Well, I say it is half Biblical.

Because other individuals, congregations and even denominations enjoy, and really focus on the Gospels at the cost of the letters. They say Jesus is the fullest revelation of God on earth, and that is true. Jesus is God come to earth. Therefore they surmise if you want to know what we are to do as individuals and the church, look at what Jesus did. Continuing with the same topic I introduced from 1 Corinthians. Luke 8 proclaims there were women traveling with the disciples. Luke 10 tells of Mary, Martha’s sister, sitting at Jesus’s feet with the other disciples, learning; and Jesus not only doesn’t kick her out to go help Martha in the kitchen, but celebrates her place in the circle of learning. All 4 gospels proclaim that not only were women the first witnesses of Jesus’ resurrection, but the first called to proclaim it. The risen Jesus said “Go and tell the disciples.” Women traveled with Jesus, learned from Jesus and were told by Jesus to go and tell the good news of resurrection. It says it in the Bible, therefore it’s Biblical. Well, I say it is half Biblical. In this one topic, the New Testament speaks very different things – one could even say contradictory things. Yet we are proclaiming with 2 Timothy that “All Scripture is inspired by God and is useful for teaching, for reproof, for correction and for training in righteousness.” How can contradictory things both be inspired by God and both be useful for teaching, reproof, correction and training in righteousness? Well, let’s dig in.

First, we don’t get to just pick the Scripture we like better and pretend the others don’t exist and are not in the Bible. That puts you squarely in the seat of authority and not Scripture. And that is terrifying. Next, we do what we have learned over the past two weeks – we put the passages in their Biblical and historical context. Then we ask why. Why does one say, “Women shall keep silent” and why does the other command women to share the Good News. For time’s sake, let’s focus on Easter morning and 1 Corinthians. All four Gospels agree that women were the first to discover Jesus’ empty tomb and that angels greeted them and helped them understand that Jesus had risen from the dead. Why? Why was it the women? Well, as we

study the Biblical and historical context, we find that: 1. The Gospels say the women were going to the tomb to finish preparing Jesus' body for burial, for they did not have time to do it properly before the Sabbath rest. And back then, preparing the dead body for burial was women's work. 2. Women could go to Jesus' tomb because they were not seen as a threat. The guards would not be afraid to let them near. Which then begs the question, were the women told to go and share what they saw simply because there were no men available. If men were there, God would have called them instead? Well, according to the Gospel of John, Mary Magdalene had been to the tomb, saw the stone was rolled away and immediately went to tell the disciples. Peter and John came running, entered the tomb and looked around and returned home. It was then, after the men left, that the angel and Jesus Himself revealed themselves to Mary. It wasn't because men were not available that women were used. The Risen Savior waited until the men left before choosing to appear to Mary and telling her to go and tell the others.

On the other side, why would First Corinthians say women should keep silent in church? In the cultural or historical context, we must recognize women were viewed as property. A smart and focused woman became valuable property, but still property. To have a woman speaking in a man's world simply decreased the credibility of the message. And as far as Bible context goes, Gnosticism was the big Christian heresy when 1 Corinthians was being written, and there were some very attractive aspects of Gnosticism for women.

So what happens when you hold these passages together? As far as the Biblical context of 1 Corinthians is concerned, is Gnosticism a rising ideology with Christian women that we need to guard against? No, it is pretty much dead in the Christian world. As far as cultural context, will it decrease the church's credibility in the United States of America in 2025 if we have women speak and lead? No, especially in the last 30 years, if organizations do not have women in their formation and presentation, a red flag goes up. There may be some from other Christian traditions who will be offended, but that is a problem of our own making. On the other side, is there a condition God chose to speak through women on that first Easter Sunday that is no longer valid today that they would be silenced? I don't think so. There were first women but then men present at the tomb, but both the angels and Jesus only spoke to the women. And they said go and tell.

Therefore, many years ago, this congregation held all of Scripture up, pushed it against itself, and decided it was Biblical to call both women and men to speak in church and serve as elders and deacons. Did we stick our head in the sand and pretend the passages from 1 Corinthians and even 1 Timothy didn't exist? No. We hold those against what Jesus said and did and find the inspired Word of God as the two press against each other within their Biblical and cultural contexts.

Now let me tell you, this is a hard way to biblically understand God's will in our lives, our community, and our churches. You don't get to find one verse of Scripture that says what you want it to say and pretend it is Biblical. It might only be half Biblical. The reality is I spend a lot of time saying, "I don't know" because different Bible passages are still pushing against each other and the eternal truth of God for our time has not dripped out yet. But to do less is to only be half Biblical at best. To say women should keep silent because 1 Cor says so is half Biblical. To say women should speak and teach because Jesus told them to is half Biblical. We can only truly be biblical when we hold them all together, in their Biblical and cultural context, and let them push against each other, for that is where the inspired truth that "is useful for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness" is to be found.

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